

## River Roads

In 1803 the United States purchased land from France. The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of America. This caused a problem for President Thomas Jefferson. He knew very little about this land. One thing he wanted to know was if there was a river that went all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

River travel was a very important form of transportation. A growing country needed rivers. Steamboats could carry people. They could carry things. They could carry mail and messages to other parts of the country.

Jefferson's solution was to hire explorers. He chose Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. In 1804 they left St. Louis, Missouri. They spent 2½ years traveling to the Pacific Ocean and back. Unfortunately, Lewis and Clark did not find a water route across the country. The Rocky Mountains blocked the way.





For many years rivers still remained an important form of transportation. More than 30 steamboats traveled the Kansas River. They went as far as Fort Riley. The problem was that after this point, the river did not have enough water. It was too shallow for these boats. Railroads could go where there were no rivers. They soon replaced steamboats. Railroads were one solution to the problem.